

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 22, 2010

The Honorable Bart Gordon  
Chairman  
Committee on Science and Technology  
2321 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ralph Hall  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science and Technology  
394 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics  
2321 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Pete Olson  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics  
394 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gordon, Ranking Member Hall, Chairwoman Giffords and Ranking Member Olson:

We write today urging you to quickly complete the NASA Authorization Act of 2010, and to incorporate in to the final version of this legislation provisions that are vital to the future of America's space program and of particular interest to the Michoud Assembly Facility (MAF).

As you are aware, NASA centers and facilities around the country are facing growing uncertainty and layoffs due to the Space Shuttle retirement, programmatic changes involving manned spaceflight, and questions over NASA's future priorities. In Louisiana, the MAF, a vital part of the space program since the 1960s, has been forced to layoff over 60% of its workforce in the past 18 months because of the Shuttle retirement, and it is facing further layoffs if a new authorization bill is not enacted by the end of the current fiscal year.

We are working with the aerospace industry, regional business leaders, and state and local officials in the Gulf Coast to offset these job losses and ensure that NASA maintains its superiority in space exploration, and we believe that the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 will help us do that. Specifically, we support the following provisions and believe that they should be included in the final authorization bill:

- Requiring NASA to move ahead with a heavy-lift launch vehicle development immediately,
- Using existing Shuttle and Constellation program parts and technology for the heavy-lift launch vehicle to be operational by the end of 2016,
- Ensuring the Orion crew exploration vehicle is maintained and fully developed for deep space missions, and
- Directing NASA to begin the refurbishment of ET-94, the Space Shuttle external fuel tank that was damaged during Hurricane Katrina and could be used as a backup tank for any additional Shuttle missions.

These provisions will save hundreds of jobs at MAF in the short term and potentially grow thousands over the long term through direct jobs and indirect suppliers. Moreover, these provisions will ensure a robust space program that will help advance America's economic, scientific, and security interests. Thus, they are critical to all NASA centers involved with manned space flight programs, including our neighboring partners at the Johnson Space Center, Marshall Space Flight Center, and Stennis Space Center.


Enacting the NASA Authorization Act before Congress recesses will ensure that NASA and its facilities move forward in the next fiscal year pursuing the programs previously outlined. If no authorization bill is passed before Congress recesses, there will be more layoffs at NASA facilities around the country, including MAF, and America's superiority in space will be further jeopardized, as will the benefits that this superiority provides to American businesses and job creation. This is unacceptable.

Therefore, we must complete the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 without delay. The Louisiana delegation stands ready to assist you as we work together to promote NASA, ensure American superiority in space, and protect vital jobs in our states. If our offices can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to let us know.


Sincerely,

  
Rodney Alexander  
Member of Congress

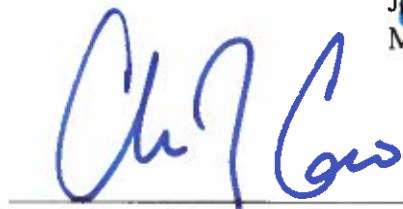
  
Charlie Melancon  
Member of Congress

  
Charles W. Boustany, Jr., M.D.  
Member of Congress

  
Steve Scalise  
Member of Congress

  
Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
Member of Congress

  
John Fleming, M.D.  
Member of Congress

  
Anh "Joseph" Cao  
Member of Congress